

31<sup>st</sup> March 2020

**UK NEQAS COVID-19 Update (2)**

Dear Valued Participants and Distributors,

UK NEQAS is adapting our operations in response to this rapidly changing exceptional situation. Our plans will evolve over the coming weeks and months, and we will regularly update you so that you are informed of any alterations to UK NEQAS services.

Currently, UK NEQAS centres are continuing to provide External Quality Assessment (EQA) to laboratories worldwide where possible, some of which are in areas affected by this pandemic and others which appear to be past their peak infection, such as China and Singapore. As such, our decisions are not based just on a national situation but rather on a worldwide basis.

EQA remains an essential component in clinical laboratory testing and whilst workloads may fluctuate the continued use of Internal Quality Control (IQC), instrument maintenance and EQA play a key role in patient diagnosis and monitoring, and thus ensuring patient safety is not compromised.

Some UK NEQAS centres have temporarily suspended EQA services, a decision that has not been taken lightly. This is related to their unique operational requirements which include such complexities as sample acquisition/production and result analysis (which often requires external expertise) as well as staff availability. For these reasons, and many others, some UK NEQAS services will be suspended whilst others can continue.

Where possible, UK NEQAS will continue to provide core EQA to support laboratories, but we recognise that some flexibility will be required in terms of local/national situations, closure dates and extensions. Therefore, we would ask that laboratories contact the relevant UK NEQAS centre directly if they feel it is necessary to request an extension to any EQA exercise and we will accommodate them where possible.

In terms of how long this will continue, we are working based on current information. Our plans may alter based on factors outside of our control and if this happens, we will endeavour to communicate this to all participants promptly. We aim to keep all our participants updated of developments via our twitter feed (@UKNEQAS) and by posting on the UK NEQAS website ([www.ukneqas.org.uk](http://www.ukneqas.org.uk)).

Our thoughts are with all our clinical laboratory colleagues worldwide at this time, we are proud to continue to support you and thank you for your continuing support of UK NEQAS.

Best regards



Mr Liam Whitby  
President of UK NEQAS